

SIDNEY

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appears that the child born in London on July 13th, 1859, was named Sidney James, and was the second in a family of three, coming between Charles and Ada London. It is a large, generalised term, but little Sidney James was born "in the very middle of London, in one of its most densely populated areas" in fact, in Cranbourn Street, Leicester Square. There, his mother carried on, as she had done before her marriage, a hairdressing business. Left an orphan as a youngish woman, she refused to live idly and uncomfortably with relations, instead, she removed herself from East Anglia, and, borrowing enough money for the purpose from a brother-in-law, set up shop in London. Evidently a woman of efficiency, she made a success of her enterprise, in a modest way the shop was a briskly going concern by the time that she met and married Mr Webb, in 1854. He belonged to an entirely different type. A man of ardent intellectual interests, he was a great reader and a keen Radical. John Stuart Mill was his hero, as later his younger son's; he was one of Mill's staunch supporters at the time of the famous Westminster election, when, on being asked by a hostile questioner at a meeting whether "It was true that he had said all working men were liars," Mill courageously replied "Yes." An accountant by profession, Mr. Webb senior, in spite of none too robust health, spent much of his time and energy on unpaid public work. He was both a Vestryman and a member of

the local
Board of Guardians one of those selfless
persons, without
personal ambition or 'drive', on whom hard
and thankless
jobs tend to be put. He did them well; he
had all kinds
of efficiencies. For instance, he was rather
surprisingly
a crack shot; and Sidney, out of piety, was, at
one stage,
a volunteer—though not a crack shot.
In the Cranbourn Street household,
the little, rose-
cheeked mother was, evidently, the active
partner, but